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AUTHOR Jamar, Donna; Pauls, Leo W.
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ABSTRACT

Based on the perception that teacher educators deliver preparation programs which have little influence on the way graduates actually teach and that they are completely out of touch with the actual teaching conditions in contemporary schools, a survey was conducted to see what activities teachers felt were most relevant for reading methods classes and most practical for classroom teachers. Subjects were 100 teachers, from each of the first, third, and fifth grades in Kansas elementary schools. The activities found most important for methods classes were working on an individual basis with a child in a reading practicum involving diagnosis, analysis and remediation, and knowing how to teach a lesson. Analyzing basal series for multicultural elements and effect on exceptional children was ranked least important. The elementary classroom activity ranked most important was developing a case report on a child, while least important was administering readability formulas. A second survey asked 40 Kansas college professors to rank the same activities, and they ranked developing goals for reading instruction most important for both methods classes and actual classroom situations. They found administering readability formulas least important for methods classes, and evaluating basal series least important for classroom situations. (SKC)

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READING TEACHERS ARE ASKED "WHAT IS RELEVANT IN CLASSROOM?"

Donna Jamar and Leo W. Pauls

Emporia State University
Emporia, Kansas

One of the most crucial problems facing teacher education today is one of relevancy. This cry for relevance suggests that what we in higher education do as we prepare students to become teachers is not compatible with the real world of the classroom. Backman tells us that as teacher educators we are perceived as (1) delivering preparation programs which have little real influence on the way in which our graduates actually teach; and (2) being completely out of touch with the actual teaching conditions in contemporary schools (1984).

Considering this perception, and to better prepare our students, we undertook a survey to determine if the activities used in our reading methods classes to teach identified course competencies were compatible with the teaching/learning activities of the elementary classroom. A questionnaire was developed listing twenty reading activities used to facilitate learning in methods classes. In considering teaching activities to enhance learning, Nelli (1981) indicates that teacher preparation programs should be designed around generic competencies based on what beginning teachers should know and be able to do and at what levels of proficiency. She identified two types of teacher competence to be considered: (1) functions and tasks of teaching and (2) behavior and action of the teacher.

For our study, one hundred teachers from each of the first, third, and fifth grades were surveyed from randomly selected elementary schools in Kansas. The teachers were to select and rate those activities they felt were most relevant and should be taught in reading methods classes (preservice) and those most practical for classroom teaching (inservice).

Figure 1 indicates the overall rating given by the first, third, and fifth grade teachers to each learning activity. The rating is based on the teachers' perceived importance of the activity for use in a reading methods class. The activity of "working on an individual basis with a child in a reading practicum involving diagnosis, analysis, and remediation" was considered the most important. "Knowing how to teach a lesson" was also rated very high. The activity considered the least important by teachers was to "analyze basal series to determine the extent of multicultural elements and the extent of activities for exceptional children."

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Figure 1
Rank Ordered According to Average
Rating for Methods Class

1. Work on an individual basis with a child in a reading practicum involving diagnosis, analysis, and remediation
2. Develop and teach a skills lesson
3. Observe children being taught a reading lesson
4. Administer a standardized reading test
5. Administer informal reading assessment measures
6. Develop goals for reading instruction
7. Administer an Informal Reading Inventory
8. Do a language-experience lesson with a group of children
9. Administer an IQ Test
10. Develop a week-long directed reading activity for a group of children
11. Develop a Case Report on a child
12. Administer a Cloze Test
13. Develop a directed reading lesson for the content fields
14. Group and schedule for reading instruction a hypothetical class of children
15. Evaluate one or two basal reading series
16. Construct materials to aid in teaching the basic skills of reading
17. Write a philosophy of reading instruction
18. Administer several reading expectancy (potential) formulas
19. Administer several readability formulas
20. Analyze basal series to determine the extent of multicultural elements and the extent of activities for exceptional children

A survey conducted by Cheek (1982) supports this data. Her survey determined reading teachers' opinions of reading courses taken at the undergraduate level. It reports that the most helpful topic covered in such courses was how to plan a reading lesson.

The overall average rating received by each activity on the basis of its perceived importance in an elementary classroom is shown in Figure 2. It is noted that to "develop a case report on a child" is considered most important while "administering readability formulas" is considered least important of the twenty possible learning activities.

Figure 2

Rank Ordered According to Average Rating in Classroom

1. Develop a Case Report on a child
2. Observe children being taught a reading lesson
3. Group and schedule for reading instruction a hypothetical class of children
4. Work on an individual basis with a child in a reading practicum involving diagnosis, analysis, and remediation
5. Write a philosophy of reading instruction
6. Administer a standardized reading test
7. Develop a week-long directed reading activity for a group of children
8. Administer several reading expectancy (potential) formulas
9. Analyze basal series to determine the extent of multicultural elements and the extent of activities for exceptional children
10. Evaluate one or two basal reading series
11. Administer an IQ Test
12. Develop goals for reading instruction
13. Develop and teach a skills lesson

14. Construct materials to aid in teaching the basic skills of reading

15. Develop a directed reading lesson for the content fields

16. Administer informal reading assessment measures

17. Do a language-experience lesson with a group of children

18. Administer a Cloze Test

19. Administer an Informal Reading Inventory

20. Administer several readability formulas

In addition, the same instrument was sent to approximately forty professors at Kansas' colleges and universities who teach the reading methods classes. They were asked to do a similar selecting and rating of the activities. The results from the professors appear in Figures 3 and 4.

Figure 3
Rank Ordered According to Average
Rating for Methods Class

1. Develop goals for reading instruction

2. Observe children being taught a reading lesson

3. Do a language-experience lesson with a group of children

4. Write a philosophy of reading instruction

5. Develop and teach a skills lesson

6. Develop a week-long directed reading activity for a group of children

7. Work on an individual basis with a child in a reading practicum involving diagnosis, analysis, and remediation

8. Construct materials to aid in teaching the basic skills of reading

9. Evaluate one or two basal reading series

10. Administer an Informal Reading Inventory

11. Analyze basal series to determine the extent of multi-cultural elements and the extent of activities for exceptional children

12. Develop a directed reading lesson for the content fields

13. Administer a Cloze Test

14. Group and schedule for reading instruction a hypothetical class of children

15. Administer informal reading assessment measures

16. Administer several reading expectancy (potential) formulas

17. Administer an IQ Test

18. Administer a standardized reading test

19. Develop a Case Report on a child

20. Administer several readability formulas

Figure 4
Rank Ordered According to Average
Rating in Classroom

1. Develop goals for reading instruction

2. Develop and teach a skills lesson

3. Develop a week-long directed reading activity for a group of children

4. Do a language-experience lesson with a group of children

5/6. Write a philosophy of reading instruction

5/6. Observe children being taught a reading lesson

7. Construct materials to aid in teaching the basic skills of reading

8. Administer several reading expectancy (potential) formulas

9. Administer informal reading assessment measures

10/11. Group and schedule for reading instruction a hypothetical class of children

10/11. Develop a directed reading lesson for the content fields

12. Work on an individual basis with a child in a reading practicum involving diagnosis, analysis, and remediation

13. Administer an Informal Reading Inventory

14. Analyze basal series to determine the extent of multi-cultural elements and the extent of activities for exceptional children

15. Develop a Case Report on a child

16. Administer an IQ Test

17. Administer a Cloze Test

18. Administer a standardized reading test

19. Administer several readability formulas

20. Evaluate one or two basal reading series

It can be concluded that elementary teachers and college professors have definite opinions concerning what should be taught in college and university reading methods classes and what should be incorporated into reading instruction in the elementary grades. It is essential that instructors of methods classes and classroom teachers concern themselves with the results of this and similar studies and incorporate the more important activities into their instructional programs.

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